

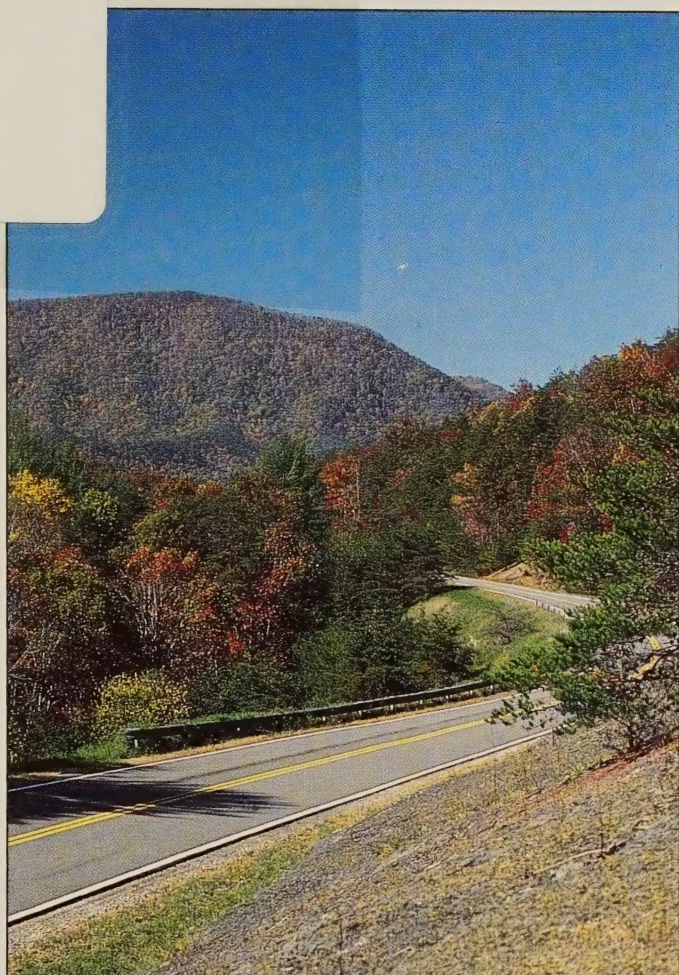
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# Big Walker Mountain Scenic Byway

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Jefferson National Forest  
*Virginia*



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CATALOGING PREP

United States Department of Agriculture  
Forest Service Southern Region






The Big Walker Mountain Scenic Byway showcases the natural beauty of southwest Virginia and the history of the area. The byway passes through 16.2 miles of national forest and private land in Bland and Wythe Counties. Travelers will find it easily accessible from Interstates 77 and 81, at Wythesville, VA. It can be a refreshing alternative to interstate driving for those who might like to leisurely enjoy some scenery.

This byway takes travelers over some of the area's most scenic land, which is beautiful year round. In the winter, the sun hitting the frozen



tree tops on Big Walker Mountain creates a spectacular winter wonderland. The colors of springtime are a welcome change after winter's whites and browns. There are many places along the byway to stop and enjoy the flowers. Summer and fall are excellent times to enjoy camping, hiking, hunting and picnicking in the Jefferson National Forest along the byway.



The area surrounding the byway is rich with history, some of which can be read on roadside markers. There are stories of Civil War battles and legendary people, such as preacher Bob Sheffey and Mary "Molly" Tynes.



# Description of Route

The byway begins at the intersection of Route 717 and Interstate 77, about 5 miles north of Wythesville. Proceed west on Route 717. Keep track of your mileage to match the 12 sites highlighted below. You will drive 16.2 miles if you cover the length of the byway.

Drive 1.1 miles to an old road that provides access to Stony Fork. You may enjoy fishing or spending the night at the primitive campsite here.

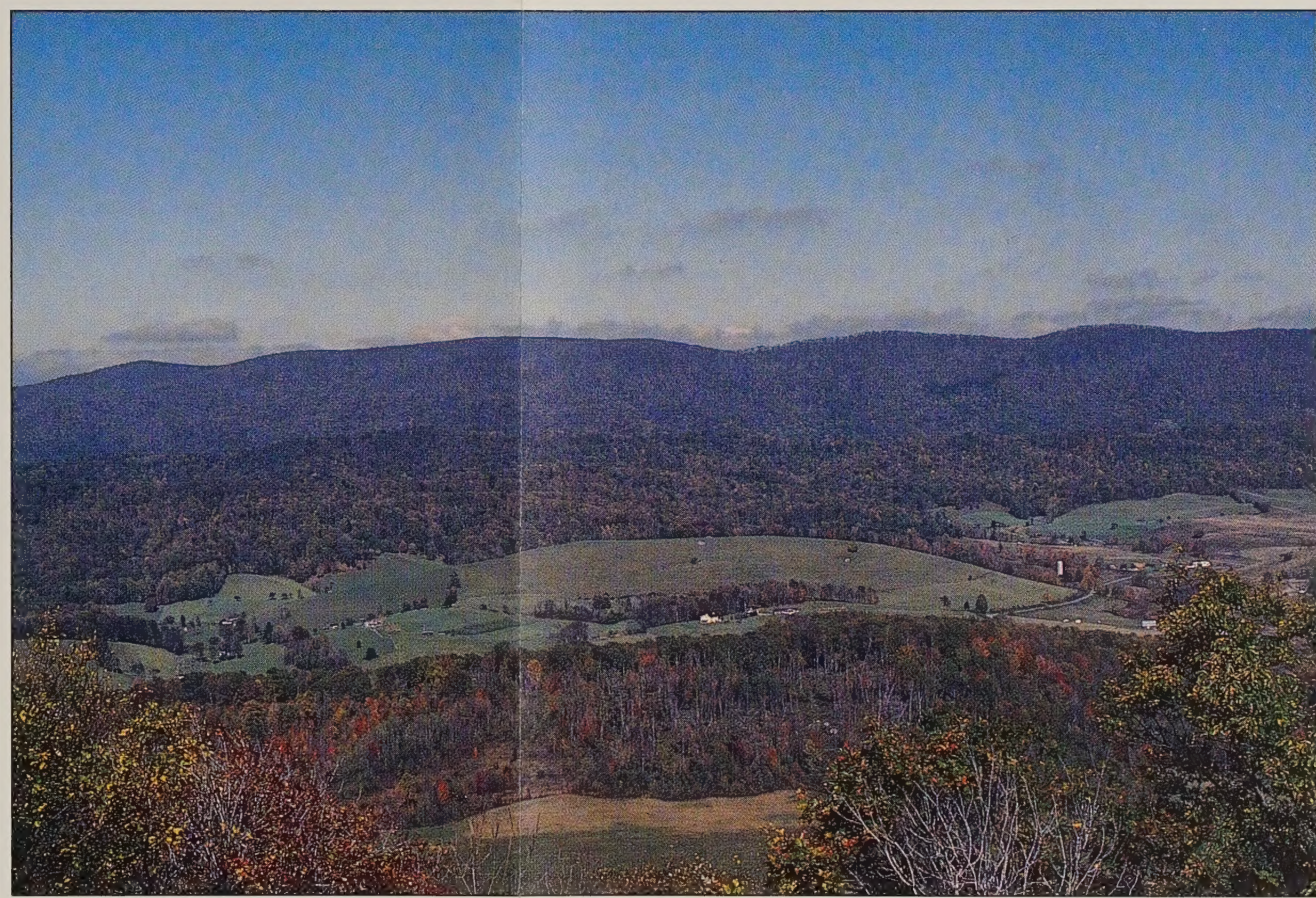
Another 0.4 mile farther, at the left, is the site of Buck and Ollie Astins' home. It is now used as a primitive campsite and access point to Stony Fork. Buck Astin and his wife Ollie lived on this site from the early 1900's until the 1970's, cutting trees for mine props and skidding the logs out with horses and mules. They dug and marketed ginseng, a native herb valued as a medicine. Like many other settlers in the area, they also used whatever else the land would provide them in order to subsist.

Drive 2.3 miles to the entrance to Stony Fork

Campground, on the left. This is a Forest Service campground. Stony Fork Creek runs through the campground, providing recreation such as fishing. Take a walk along the nature trail next to the campground.

In another half mile, Route 717 intersects U.S. 52. Here, the byway turns right and ascends Big Walker Mountain.

Drive 0.4 mile, where U.S. 52 intersects with Route 686. This State road leads to the

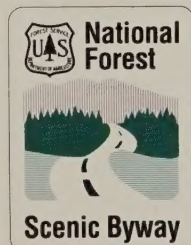


privately-owned Deer Trail Park campground.

Go 3.1 miles to the site of Big Walker Lookout. The Lookout is a privately-owned business started by Stuart and Abigail Kime in the early 1950's, when U.S. 52 was a new highway. Located here is a 100-foot tower, at the top of which is a spectacular view of several States.



## BIG WALKER MOUNTAIN SCENIC BYWAY



Wythe Ranger District  
1625 West Lee Highway  
Wytheville, VA 24382  
Telephone: (703) 228-5551

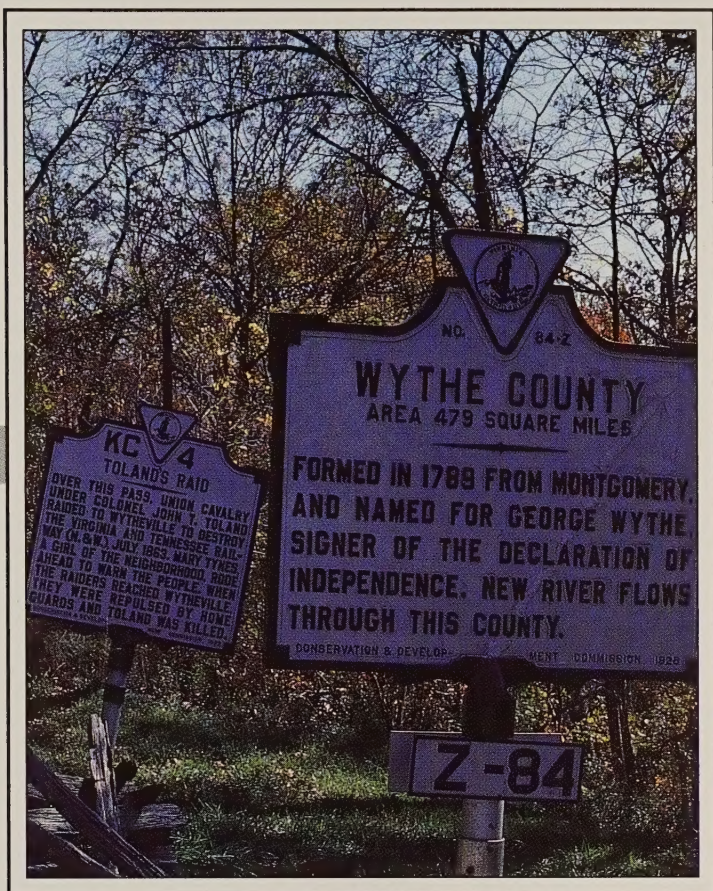
You are now at about the halfway point of the byway.

Big Bend Picnic Area is 4 miles from U.S. 52 on Forest Service Road 206, which is to the right of Route 52. Big Bend is set amidst orchard grass under a canopy of oaks at an elevation of 4,000 feet. This site offers vistas of the ridge and valley terrain to the south. It is open all year and there is no fee.

Two historical markers are next to Big Walker Lookout. One marks the place Mary Tynes supposedly came across the mountain to warn the people of Wytheville about a raid

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by Colonel John Toland, July, 1863. The other sign tells about the forming of Wythe and Bland counties and marks the boundary between the two.



Drive 2.7 miles to a sign marking the home place of S.H. Newberry. He was a member of the "Big Four" in the Virginia Senate just after the Civil War. Many interesting stories exist about their influence on postwar Virginia.

In another 2.2 miles, U.S. 52 intersects Route 615. This State road is an access point for the Appalachian Trail.

If you're ready for a picnic, go another 0.1 mile. There is a roadside table on the right side of the road.

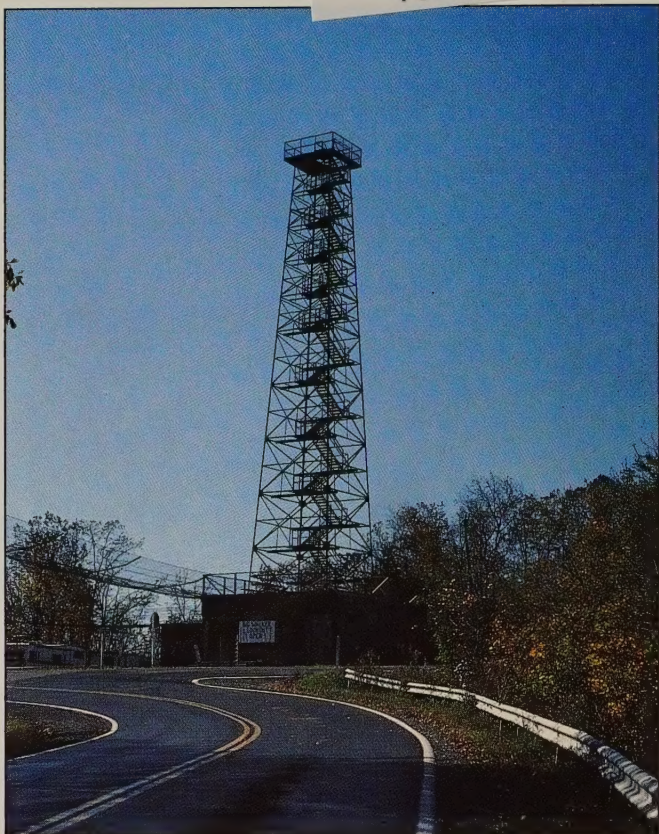
Drive 2.8 miles, where U.S. 52 crosses Interstate 77. The byway ends here. At this point, you may want to try another unusual travel experience – a tunnel more than a mile long. To reach it, take I-77 south for about 4 1/2 miles.

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Wythe Ranger District  
Jefferson National Forest  
USDA Forest Service – Southern Region  
1625 West Lee Highway  
Wytheville, VA 24382  
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